

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9869

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

S E C R E T SEOUL 3159

EXDIS

DEPT PASS CINCPAC AND CINCUNC KOREA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, UNGA, MCAP, KS, US

SUBJECT: RESTRUCTURING OF UNC

REF: (A) STATE 99867 (B) STATE 100206

1. EMBASSY IS FULLY IN AGREEMENT WITH BASIC APPROACH TO UNC OUTLINED IN REFTEL A. WHILE WE ARE NOT AT ALL SANGUINE THAT UNC CHANGES CAN IN FACT THWART HOSTILE UNGA RESOLUTION WE NEVERTHELESS AGREE THAT WE MUST MAKE DETERMINED EFFORT ALONG THOSE LINES.

2. ROKG HAS CONCLUDED THAT, AT MINIMUM, FOR CHANGES TO MAKE ANY IMPACT ON UNGA VOTE, THEY WILL HAVE TO BE HIGHLY VISIBLE AND CLEARLY RESTRICT UNC TO FUNCTION OF CARRYING OUT ITS ROLE AS SIGNATORY TO ARMISTICE AGREEMENT. WE BELIEVE THIS CONSIDERATION RULES OUT OPTION C IN PARA 7 REFTEL AS A FEASIBLE RESTRUCTURING OF UNC. AS REFTEL POINTS OUT, THIS OPTION MAKES ONLY COSMETIC CHANGES IN UNC, AND WE DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD BE SEEN EITHER BY OUR UNGA SUPPORTERS OR ADVERSARIES AS A SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION OF UNC. ROKG WOULD ALSO BE DISSATISFIED BY ANY MEASURE WHICH DID NOT HOLD OUT REAL HOPE OF INFLUENCING UNGA ATTITUDES.

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3. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, ROKG NOW EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC OVER UNGA VOTE PROSPECTS AND IS THINKING IN TERMS OF EVEN MORE SUBSTANTIAL SURGERY OF UNC. EXTENT OF THEIR THINKING IS INDICATED BY RECENT AIRING BY AMBASSADOR HAHM OF TENTATIVE PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH UNC TOTALLY (REFTEL B).

4. WHILE WE ARE IN FAVOR OF PARING UNC FUNCTIONS TO THE BONE, WE WOULD BE OPPOSED AT THIS POINT TO GIVING UP OPCON OVER ROK FORCES. WE BELIEVE THAT IMPACT OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN SITUATION AND CONTINUING DOUBTS OVER US COMMITMENT WOULD PROMPT ROKG TO VIEW OUR GIVING UP OPCON AS MAJOR REDUCTION OF US DEFENSE ROLE IN KOREA. OBVIOUSLY, OPCON IN ITSELF IS VITALLY IMPORTANT ISSUE, AND IT SHOULD NOT BE DEALT WITH AS ANCILLARY ASPECT OF EFFORTS AIMED AT THIS YEAR'S UNGA. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WOULD BE OPPOSED TO OPTION A, WHICH TAKES OPCON OUT OF US HANDS EXCEPT IN EVENT OF HOSTILITIES.

5. WE BELIEVE THAT OPTION B PRESENTS BEST ALTERNATIVE. IT IS AN APPROACH THAT WOULD COMBINE MAXIMUM FEASIBLE CHANGES IN UNC WITH PRESERVATION AT THIS CRUCIAL TIME OF OPCON OF ROK FORCES. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ROKG, WHICH HAS ALREADY PROPOSED COMBINED US/ROK HEADQUARTERS. WE WOULD FORCE EARLY START OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH ROKG TO REACH AGREEMENT ON BROAD OUTLINES IN MAY AS PROPOSED REFTEL.

6. AS WE SEE IT, IMPORTANT ARMISTICE-RELATED QUESTION DOES ARISE IN ADOPTING OPTION B: HOW TO ANSWER POSSIBLE CHARGE THAT WE HAVE UNILATERALLY ABROGATED ARMISTICE BY REDUCING CINCUNC STATURE TO POINT HE CANNOT EFFECTIVELY FULFILL HIS ARMISTICE OBLIGATIONS. UNDER NEW ARRANGEMENT DPRK MIGHT WELL ASK CINCUNC HOW, WITHOUT FORCES AT HIS DISPOSAL, HE PLANNED TO MAINTAIN "MILITARY CONTROL" OF THE FIVE COASTAL ISLANDS (PARA 13B OF ARMISTICE) OR HOW HE PLANNED TO INSURE COMPLETE COMPLIANCE WITH ALL PROVISIONS OF ARMISTICE (PARA 17).

7. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS ESSENTIALLY LEGALISTIC PROBLEM. IN FACT, OPTION B PRESERVES FEATURES OF CURRENT
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ARRANGEMENT ESSENTIAL TO US: EXISTENCE OF A UN COMMAND SO THAT ARMISTICE SIGNATORY CONTINUES AS FUNCTIONING ENTITY, UNCHANGED FORCE DEPLOYMENTS, AND OPCON. THUS, PROBLEM AS WE SEE IT IS HOW TO RESPOND TO RHETORICAL CHALLENGE, AND WE ASSUME WASHINGTON LAWYERS HAVE OR WILL FIND APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE. TWO COMPLEMENTARY ACTIONS THAT MIGHT HELP OUR POSITION WOULD BE: PUBLIC UNDERTAKING BY COMMANDER NEW JOINT HEADQUARTERS TO FULFILL ALL TERMS OF

ARMISTICE, BACKED UP AT SAME POINT BY STATEMENT BY NEW
CINCUNC THAT IN THE EVENT ARMISTICE VIOLATION OCCURRED HE
WOULD BE ABLE TO CALL ON US/ROK TROOPS TO MEET ARMISTICE
OBLIGATIONS.

8. IN VIEW OF NEED FOR RAPID ACTION IN ORDER TO MAKE
UNGA IMPACT, WE HOPE ABOVE APPROACH WILL BE GIVEN URGENT
CONSIDERATION. SNEIDER

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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NNN

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